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WORLD SHEEP NUMBERS IN 1947 AND 1948

World sheep numbers at the beginning of 1948 are estimated at about 711 million head, or 22 million head more than the preceding year. This is an increase of 3 percent over 1947, but is still 3 percent below the 5-year average for the 1936-40 period.

The most significant increase since the beginning of 1947 occurred in Australia with smaller increases in all of the other continents, except North America, where sheep numbers, particularly in the United States and Canada, continued to decline. The increases reflect favorable grazing and weather conditions and greater economic returns in various areas of the world, while the decreases in other areas reflect higher production costs and more profitable alternative farm enterprises.

SHEEP: Estimated world numbers, by continents, averages 1931-35 and 1936-40, annual 1944-48

Continent or area	Averages 1931-35	Averages 1936-40	1944	1945	1946	1947 1/	1948 1/
	Thousands	Thousands	Thousands	Thousands	Thousands	Thousands	Thousands
North America	60,200	59,600	59,400	55,200	50,800	45,600	42,800
Europe	2/ 123,900	123,400	108,200	99,700	100,300	100,700	103,100
Soviet Union	3/	66,000	3/	3/	61,100	60,800	64,800
Asia	140,800	141,300	137,500	138,600	142,500	147,300	147,400
South America	96,700	100,900	115,000	117,200	116,900	121,800	126,500
Africa	98,600	99,300	97,100	94,900	87,900	84,900	88,000
Oceania	140,200	144,000	156,400	139,400	129,400	128,300	138,500
Total	706,400	734,500	732,600	705,000	688,900	689,400	711,100

1/ Preliminary. 2/ Not strictly comparable with later years, due to territorial changes. 3/ Estimate included in the total.

Higher prices for wool and lambs and more favorable grazing and weather conditions have encouraged sheep raising in Australia and New Zealand during 1947 - and early in 1948. Likewise, favorable returns for export of wool and mutton in the principal sheep-producing countries of South America, and domestic demand for meat and wool in Asia and the Soviet Union, have encouraged those countries to further increase sheep numbers. In the Near and Far Eastern Asiatic countries the good export demand and relatively high prices for carpet wool have contributed to increases in sheep numbers.

In Europe, the increased domestic demand and slightly improved grazing conditions have brought about a moderate increase in European sheep numbers, particularly in the United Kingdom, Spain, Rumania, Italy, France, and Bulgaria. Moderate gains in French North Africa and in the Union of South Africa have partially restored African sheep numbers. On the other hand, high production costs and more remunerative returns from other farm enterprises in the United States and Canada have resulted in reduced flocks with sheep raisers shifting to alternative farm enterprises.

The change in sheep numbers from prewar to 1948 has been somewhat different in various parts of the world, reflecting both the abnormal weather and economic conditions of the past few years. In Asia, numbers in 1948 were 4 percent above the 1936-40 average. Oceania, on the other hand, showed an increase of 8 percent over the previous year, but is still 4 percent below the prewar average. Numbers in Australia are recovering rapidly from the heavy liquidation that occurred during the drought years of 1943-46 and numbers are still about 7 percent below the 1936-40 average. In South America, sheep numbers increased moderately over 1947 and are 25 percent above prewar. South America has shown the largest increase since prewar of any of the continents. The largest expansion in the South American countries occurred in Argentina where numbers are now levelling off.

In Europe, sheep numbers were less affected by war and feed shortage than hogs and poultry but suffered more than cattle. Africa and the Soviet Union showed increases over 1947, but are still somewhat below the prewar level. Sheep numbers in North American countries in 1948 were down 6 percent from the previous year and were almost 29 percent below the 1936-40 average.

North America

At the beginning of 1948, North America had about 6 percent of the sheep in the world. United States, with 35.3 million head, had around 82 percent of the sheep on the continent. Sheep numbers in the United States had dropped almost 2.5 million head, or 7 percent, from a year earlier and were about 31 percent below the 1936-40 average. Numbers are now the lowest since 1871.

The continual decline in sheep numbers is attributed primarily to increasing production costs and decreasing returns. As a result of these factors, sheep raisers reduced their flocks and shifted to other farm enterprises where returns were more remunerative. Rebuilding of flocks is likely to be gradual and prolonged and apparently will be dependent on the prospective demand and price of mutton rather than on the price of wool. The price of wool is largely determined by demand and supply conditions throughout the world.

Sheep on farms in Canada on December 1, 1947 were estimated at about 1.6 million head, a decline of 11 percent from the preceding year and around 40 percent below the 1936-40 average. Decreases were reported in all provinces, except British Columbia, Prince Edward Island and Brunswick. The downward trend is likely to continue. Exports of mutton were excluded from the 1948 United Kingdom agreement because marketing of sheep and lambs is expected to be very light during the year. In Mexico, sheep numbers were somewhat higher last June, but foot-and-mouth disease and other factors are expected to reduce numbers somewhat this year. The other North American countries are believed to have maintained their sheep numbers at the 1947 level.

Europe

The European continent, exclusive of the Soviet Union, had about 14 percent of the world sheep numbers at the beginning of this year. Sheep numbers are now estimated to have increased better than 2 percent from a year earlier, but are still almost 17 percent below the 1936-40 average. In the United Kingdom, because of extremely heavy losses resulting from the severity of the 1946-47 winter and floods in the spring of 1947, sheep numbers are believed to have reached their lowest level in 80 years. Numbers in June 1947 were 16.7 million head, compared with 20.4 million a year previous. This represents a decline of about 18 percent from a year earlier and 36 percent below the five-year average for 1936-40. In view of more favorable conditions and the agricultural expansion program, it is likely that numbers have reached the lowest level and will show an upturn in 1948.

Spain, the other large sheep-producing country of Europe, seems to have continued the downward trend in sheep numbers which began in 1945. Present numbers are perhaps considerably below the 1944 peak of 24.3 million head, but only slightly lower than the 1936-40 average. This seems to be consistent with the Government's policy to reduce numbers, but to increase the quantity and improve the quality of wool per animal. Sheep numbers in Portugal are estimated at 4 million head, slightly above the 1936-40 average.

Sheep numbers in Italy are believed to have shown a considerable increase in 1947 over the preceding year, but still appear to be about 9 percent below the average for the 1936-40 period. Numbers at this time, however, are believed to be increasing and 1948 is expected to exceed 1947. France, likewise, reflects an upward trend since 1945. Although numbers have increased progressively, they are still about 24 percent below the 1936-40 average and the reversal of the long-time trend is not at all likely.

Sheep numbers in Poland and Hungary are making a very slow recovery. Numbers in Poland are slightly more than one-half of prewar and Hungary has barely more than one-third of its prewar numbers. Heavy losses during the war and shortage of breeding animals and feed may account for delayed recovery.

At the beginning of the year, sheep numbers in all of the principal Balkan countries, except Greece, are believed to have increased from a year earlier. Sheep numbers in Bulgaria are larger than prewar, while numbers in Yugoslavia are believed to be approaching the prewar level.

Rumania, because of the severe drought in 1946 and other factors related to the war and occupation, is believed to have reached only about three-fourths of its prewar numbers. Greece, the other principal sheep producing country in the Balkan group, may have reached almost two-thirds of prewar numbers, but internal strife and other difficulties are believed to have reduced present sheep numbers. Restocking of flocks and shortage of feed were perhaps the main obstacles to restoring numbers in Rumania and Greece.

Sheep numbers on January 1 in the Soviet Union, the second largest sheep-producing country in the world, were estimated at 64.8 million head, an increase of over 6 percent from a year earlier and within 2 percent of the prewar level. An improved feed situation, particularly grazing, and rebuilding of flocks, have materially assisted in the restoration of sheep numbers. Based upon improved conditions and their predetermined plan for increasing numbers, further increase can be anticipated in 1948.

Asia

Asia, the largest sheep-producing continent, has over one-fifth of the sheep in the world. Over 75 percent of the sheep are in India, China, Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria. These sheep are of the coarse wool type and supply the carpet wools.

India's sheep numbers reached 50 million head in 1947 and are almost 7 million head greater than the average for the 1936-40 period. China, with 22 million head, is still about 4 million below prewar. Turkey, on the other hand, is slightly above the 1936-40 average. Iran showed a decrease at the beginning of the year from that of a year earlier and is almost 1.5 million head below the 1936-40 average. Iraq is believed to be somewhere around 1.5 million head above the 1936-40 level. Syria, however, has shown a considerable increase of almost 1.5 million head, an increase of 69 percent.

Africa

Sheep numbers on the African continent began to decline in 1945 and are believed to have leveled off in 1947. Numbers at the beginning of the year were estimated at 88 million head, an increase of 3 million from a year earlier, but over 11 million below the 1936-40 average. Although sheep are raised in all of the African countries, the principal sheep-producing areas of the continent, particularly from the viewpoint of wool exports, are British South Africa, including the Union of South Africa, and French North Africa, including Algeria, Tunisia, and French Morocco.

The Union of South Africa has more than 30 million head, or more than one-third of all the sheep on the continent. However, present numbers are believed to be approximately 25 percent below the 1936-40 average. Only minor, if any, increases in numbers can be anticipated during the present period in which the soil conservation program is being carried out. The program is designed to restore and improve all agricultural land, including grazing. Sheep numbers in French North Africa have not recovered from the droughts of recent years. Numbers in French Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia are all below the 1936-40 average.

South America

The South American continent, with 126.5 million head, is third in importance and now has almost 18 percent of the world sheep numbers. Favorable economic returns for mutton and wool exports have provided the incentive for increasing numbers. Since prewar, the continent has shown a gradual upward trend in numbers and is now more than 25 percent above the 1936-40 average. All of the principal sheep-producing countries have shown a gradual increase, except that Argentina reached its peak in 1945 and since prewar the numbers in Chile have remained relatively constant.

Argentina, the largest sheep-producing country on the continent, had about 45 percent of all the sheep in South America in 1947. Although sheep numbers are estimated at 54.8 million head in 1948, slightly higher than 1947, it is reported that rising labor costs and shortage of labor is causing some producers to reduce their flocks. Present numbers are believed to be leveling off and are now about 22 percent above the 1936-40 average.

In Uruguay, sheep numbers have reached 22 million head in the spring of 1948, their highest number, almost 23 percent above the 1936-40 level. As a result of the 1943 drought and the particular suitability of the climate to sheep production, there has been some shift from cattle to sheep raising. This change may be reflected in the upward trend in sheep numbers in 1947 and 1948.

Sheep numbers in Brazil were estimated at 17 million head in 1947 and are now estimated to reach 18 million by September of this year. Based on the last estimate, sheep numbers in 1948 would be about 57 percent above the prewar figures of 1936-40. Numbers in Peru show an increase over the previous year and are now about 15 percent above prewar. Although sheep numbers in Chile are relatively constant from year to year, it is expected that numbers will increase in 1948.

Oceania

Sheep numbers in Australia and New Zealand at the present time are estimated at 138.5 million head, an increase of 8 percent over a year earlier, but numbers are still 4 percent below the prewar average. Australia and New Zealand have about 14.8 and 4.7 percent, respectively, of the world sheep numbers.

In 1948, sheep numbers in Australia showed an increase of 10 percent over 1947 and are now about 7 percent below the 1936-40 average. Recovery following the drought extending from 1943 to 1946 has been rather rapid. The very sizeable increase reflects most favorable seasonal conditions. Pastures are reported as providing an abundance of grazing and stock are in good to excellent condition. Spring lambing in all states has been indicated as satisfactory and prospects for a good autumn or fall are excellent.

New Zealand also increased its sheep numbers in 1948 by 3 percent over the preceding year. Present numbers are almost as high as the peak numbers reached in 1945 and 7 percent larger than the 1936-40 average. Weather and grazing conditions in 1947 were favorable to sheep raising. A slight deterioration in pastures in late December and the first part of January resulted in heavy marketings, but general rains in the latter part of January resulted in pasture improvement. Some decrease occurred in breeding ewes, but was offset by a very high lambing percentage of 93.11 percent, the highest on record for this country.

This is one of a series of regularly scheduled reports on world agricultural production approved by the Office of Foreign Agricultural Relations Committee on Foreign Crop and Livestock Statistics. For this report, the Committee was composed of Joseph A. Becker, Chairman, C. M. Purves, Elmer A. Reese, Hazel B. Kefauver, Esther H. Johnson, Mary E. Long, and Constance H. Farnworth.

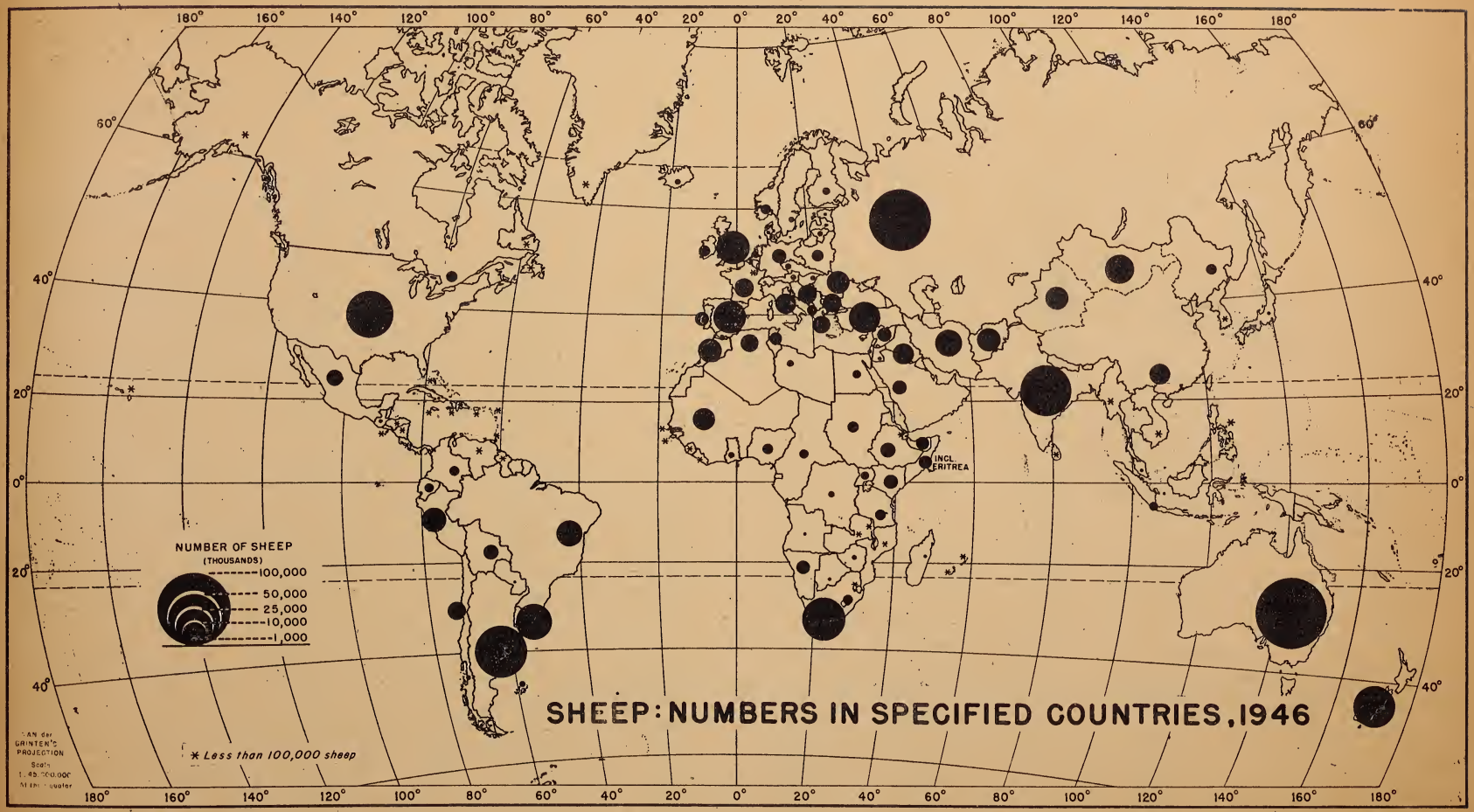
SHEEP: Number in specified countries, averages 1931-35 and 1936-40, annual 1943-48

Continent and Country	Month of Estimate 1/	Average 1931-35	Average 1936-40	1943	1944	1945	1946	1947 2/	1948 2/
		Thousands	Thousands	Thousands	Thousands	Thousands	Thousands	Thousands	Thousands
North America									
Canada	Dec. 1 1/	3/ 2,762	2,651	2,483	2,733	2,822	2,456	1,782	1,587
Guatemala	July	174	273	438	368	330	300	-	-
Mexico	June	4/ 3,674	3/ 4,809	-	-	-	-	5,230	-
United States	Jan. 1	53,100	51,404	55,150	50,782	46,520	42,436	37,818	35,332
Estimated total		60,200	59,600	-	59,400	55,200	50,800	45,600	42,800
Europe									
Albania		1,503	3/ 1,576	-	1,700	1,600	1,700	-	-
Austria	Dec. 3 1/	4/5/ 263	3/ 316	402	444	460	391	399	474
Belgium	Jan. 1	1/4/ 187	1/4/ 187	216	213	199	177	144	107
Bulgaria 6/	Dec. 31 1/	8,185	8,746	8,863	8,600	7,100	7,800	8,784	9,000
Czechoslovakia 7/	Jan. 1	-	3/ 492	490	519	560	510	490	400
Denmark	July 15	4/ 179	4/ 147	186	203	213	178	83	-
Eire	June	3,283	3,076	2,560	2,663	2,581	2,423	2,094	-
Finland	Mar. 1	8/ 973	8/ 1,007	789	965	1,015	1,099	982	-
France	Fall 1/	9,812	9,648	9/ 7,171	9/ 6,715	9/ 6,300	9/ 6,632	7,259	7,330
Germany 10/	Dec. 1 1/	-	3/ 3,729	4,105	4,349	-	3,018	2,988	3,150
Greece	Dec. 31 1/	7,227	3/ 8,304	-	-	5,300	5,600	6,000	5,800
Hungary	Spring	1,204	1,490	1,155	1,199	328	370	488	525
Iceland	Spring	696	624	618	539	532	545	550	-
Italy	July	4/5/ 10,269	5/ 9,453	8,450	6,960	7,100	7,900	8,600	-
Netherlands	May	3/ 661	636	451	460	489	558	460	450
Norway	June	1,725	3/ 1,752	1,690	1,800	1,780	1,707	1,698	-
Poland 11/	June 30	-	4/ 1,941	-	-	710	759	981	-
Portugal	Dec. 31 1/	12/ 3,274	13/ 3,948	3,800	3,700	3,500	3,900	4,000	4,000
Rumania 14/	Dec. 31 1/	15/ 9,736	15/ 9,736	-	-	-	6,799	7,100	7,300
Spain	Dec. 31 1/	3/ 17,948	4/ 20,000	23,489	24,310	22,000	20,183	19,500	19,700
Sweden	Summer	542	398	520	558	516	482	420	-
Switzerland	April	4/ 185	3/ 177	204	209	193	195	182	170
United Kingdom	June	26,047	26,112	20,383	20,107	20,150	20,358	16,713	-
Yugoslavia	Dec. 31 1/	8,471	9,796	-	-	-	-	-	-
Estimated total		16/ 123,900	123,400	-	108,200	99,700	100,300	100,700	103,100
Soviet Union 11/	Jan. 1	-	4/ 66,000	-	-	-	61,100	60,800	64,800
Asia									
Cyprus 17/	March	290	300	265	303	331	315	-	-
Iran	Mar. 21	14,696	14,497	13,720	13,730	13,020	12,950	13,190	13,000
Iraq	Jan.	3/ 6,645	3/ 7,090	6,125	6,000	7,250	8,000	-	-
Palestine 17/	Spring	218	4/ 209	244	-	-	-	-	-
Syria	Dec. 31 1/	-	3/ 2,060	2,092	2,216	2,777	3,091	3,260	3,482
Trans-Jordan		220	216	243	273	296	-	-	-
Turkey 17/	Dec. 31 1/	11,195	16,080	17,283	16,125	17,266	18,062	17,874	-
British Malaya 18/		228	339	-	-	-	-	-	-
China 19/	May	3/ 30,000	26,000	-	21,000	21,000	20,000	22,000	-
India	Dec. 31 1/	43,347	43,258	-	-	-	48,000	50,000	-
Netherlands Indies	Dec. 31 1/	4/ 1,804	4/ 1,337	-	-	-	-	-	-
Estimated total		140,800	141,300	-	137,500	138,600	142,500	147,300	147,400

South America											
Argentina	July	3/	40,566	3/	44,900	-	-	56,182	53,000	54,500	54,800
Bolivia	Dec. 31 1/	3/	5,126	4/	2,608	3,959	-	-	4,014	4,289	4,534
Brazil	Sept.	3/	11,673	3/	11,438	10,650	11,000	13,283	15,542	17,000	18,000
Chile	June	4/	6,083	3/	5,855	-	6,040	6,000	5,900	5,700	6,000
Colombia	Dec. 31 1/	3/	853	3/	916	-	-	-	1,800	-	-
Ecuador		20/	1,500		-	1,430	-	-	1,158	-	-
Paraguay	Dec. 31 1/	3/	191	3/	159	-	170	-	-	-	-
Peru		4/	12,000	4/	14,900	-	-	14,007	-	-	1/ 17,288
Uruguay	April	3/	17,982	4/	17,931	-	1/ 20,289	-	19,567	20,500	22,000
Estimated total			96,700		100,900	-	115,000	117,200	116,900	121,800	126,500
Africa											
Algeria 17/			5,312		6,270	5,529	5,832	5,376	2,808	2,910	3,000
Anglo-Egyptian Sudan			2,310	3/	2,500	-	-	-	-	4,800	-
Kenya		3/	3,240	3/	3,274	-	-	3,075	-	-	-
Tanganyika	Dec. 31 1/		2,212		1,780	1,996	2,208	2,019	2,159	-	-
Basutoland			1,884		1,443	-	-	1,545	-	-	-
British Somaliland			2,500	3/	2,900	-	-	-	-	-	-
Egypt	June	5/	1,353	3/5/	1,771	1,424	1,400	1,385	1,385	1,400	-
French Morocco 17/	Dec. 31 1/		7,764		10,315	12,870	10,860	10,617	8,620	6,031	8,000
French West Africa and Togo			8,367	3/	8,052	8,240	8,160	8,570	-	-	-
Madagascar 17/	Dec. 31 1/		194		193	220	229	174	161	156	-
Southern Rhodesia	Dec. 31 1/		350		310	286	320	334	330	325	-
South West Africa			1,156	3/	2,972	3,534	-	-	-	-	-
Spanish Morocco 17/		3/	553		481	618	699	603	443	-	-
Tunisia	Dec. 31 1/		2,967		3,026	3,667	3,220	3,328	2,974	2,783	-
Union of South Africa	August		44,054		39,899	37,888	-	-	30,801	30,500	-
Estimated total			98,600		99,300	-	97,100	94,900	87,900	84,900	88,000
Oceania											
Australia	Mar. 31	1/	111,417	1/	112,571	124,615	123,174	105,371	96,396	95,723	105,000
New Zealand	Apr. 30		28,793		31,352	33,155	33,200	33,975	33,000	32,500	33,500
Estimated total			140,200		144,000	-	156,400	139,400	129,400	128,200	138,500
Estimated world total			706,400		734,500	-	732,600	705,000	688,900	689,400	711,100

1/ End of year estimates (October to December) included under following year for comparisons and totals. Thus, for Canada the December 1942 estimate of 2,483,000 is shown under 1943. 2/ Preliminary. 3/ Average for 2 to 4 years only. 4/ Census or estimate for single year. 5/ March. 6/ Includes Southern Dobrudja, beginning 1943. Years 1944-46 adjusted to make comparable series. 7/ Present territory - excludes Sub-Carpathian Russia. 8/ September. 9/ Official statistics; may be an underestimate of actual numbers. 10/ Totals for 4 zones of occupation. 11/ Present territory. 12/ Census, December 31, 1934. 13/ Census, December 31, 1940. 14/ Present territory - excludes Southern Dobrudja. 15/ Average for years 1930-39. 16/ Not strictly comparable with later years, due to territorial changes. 17/ Data include only number taxed. 18/ Data include goats. 19/ Includes China Proper (22 provinces), Manchuria, Jehol, and Sinkiang (Turkestan). 20/ 1929.

Office of Foreign Agricultural Relations. Prepared or estimated on the basis of official statistics of foreign governments, reports of United States foreign service officers, and other information. Data relate to prewar boundaries, unless otherwise noted. Totals include estimates for countries for which official statistics are unavailable.



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